

A Visit to the Birthplace of Art

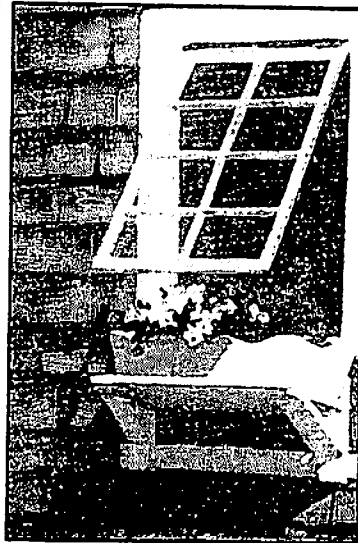
What's Here's an offbeat idea for a family outing. Visit an artist's open studio. It's essential, I believe, to take kids to museums and art galleries. But going to the place where art gets born reminds us that art doesn't just happen. Art gets created by painters, sculptors, potters and other real people who do the real work of making art.

Salon on St. George Street

Upstairs, over the garage of her home at 301 St. George Street, Duxbury painter Bettina Lesieur has put together a salon of sorts—a sanctuary that offers her the solitude she needs to do her best work. You can see it, as well as a huge body of her paintings, when she opens her doors and mounts a personal exhibition on December 3-10. She'll hold a festive reception on Friday, December 3, from 3-8, and Saturday, December 4, from 5-9, then stay open from 1-5 on Sunday afternoon, and 10 am - 2 pm the rest of the week.

It's worth going to Lesieur's open studio just to discover the inspired space she has created. Natural light floods in. Windows all around let her look out onto her garden—like Monet, Lesieur has made a little world of flowers and green things that are beautiful even in winter. An expanse of white faux-wall provides an ideal surface for showing art at its best, as well as a hiding place for supplies and frames. It's clearly a kingdom devised by someone who approaches beauty in a thoughtful way.

That thoughtful, orderly approach to beauty is also reflected in Lesieur's art. A



Bettina Lesieur's painting of a Provence window

prolific painter, her portfolio includes still lifes, landscapes, New England seascapes and scenes from Provence.

Children welcome

Both of Lesieur's parents were artists and teachers, and she acknowledges the instruction and support she got from her mother and father as her most significant influence. Lesieur's inherited gift for painting also extends to mentoring.

For the past eight years, she has taught art privately to children, in after-school classes five days a week. She encourages her students and other children to attend the open studio on Friday night, when the snacks and activities will be planned with them in mind.

As I mentioned, I'm personally fond of this sort of thing as a family outing. Indeed, as a mother of three children whose ages are widely spaced, I'm challenged to find destinations which appeal to my husband and me as well as a young adult and a first grader. Several years ago, when the oldest was 13 and the youngest was 2 (talk about a challenge!), we stumbled en masse into Boston's South End open studios. There, we went from place to place, room to

room, each of us finding our own delight in discovering the range and variety that exists among art, artists and ambience. Sally, my youngest, was perhaps most interested in the pretzels and cookies that were set out for guests. Nicholas, my oldest, was just beginning to march to the beat of his own drummer. He enjoyed relating to creative adults, many of whom seemed to be living a life that was something other than ordinary. Tim, my middle child, has been an artist-at-heart since birth. He was like a sponge, absorbing new ideas and techniques that were happily shared with a genuinely curious child. My husband and I discovered new works we loved, and even added to our collection.

Open studio in Rockland

This sort of "happening" is best suited to artist enclaves like the Codman building on Route 139 in Rockland. The fourth floor of this rambling old industrial space was opened up to artists several years ago. Now more than 60 of them do their work there, including several with Duxbury connections, like weaver Penelope Walker, wood artist Craig Bloodgood, and jeweler/metal smith Sue Kowalksi.

Pat Isaac, who took a Codman studio two years ago when she retired from public school teaching, says she thrives on the collective creative energy that flows freely in a place where so many artists are working. On Saturday and Sunday, November 20 and 21, from noon till 5 pm, the public is invited to become part of that energy at an open studio, where they can enjoy refreshments, meet the artists and view work in the place where it is created.

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